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ABSTRACT

Developed in response to numerous requests from curriculum specialists and classroom teachers, this booklet addresses student assessment in written composition. Its purpose is: (1) to assist teachers in constructing writing prompts which correspond to the TEAMS (Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills) writing objectives and measurement specifications; (2) to provide sample writing prompts; and (3) to guide teachers in the evaluation of their students' written compositions. It includes sample prompts and sample writing assignments for each of grades 3, 5, 7, and 9 for the various forms of writing; a discussion of purpose; and scoring suggestions. (RAE)

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DEVELOPING WRITING PROMPTS FOR TEAMS WRITTEN COMPOSITION

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TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY
AUSTIN, TEXAS

1988

DEVELOPING WRITING PROMPTS FOR TEAMS WRITTEN COMPOSITION

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"Developing Prompts for TEAMS Written Composition" was created in response to numerous requests from curriculum specialists and classroom teachers for such a document. Staff persons in the Divisions of Student Assessment and General Education collaborated to produce this publication.

INTRODUCTION

This manuscript, "Developing Writing Prompts for TEAMS Written Composition, Grades 3, 5, 7, and 9" is the third publication by the Texas Education Agency addressing student assessment in written composition. The first and basic publication for each grade is the TEAMS Writing Objectives and Measurement Specifications. It contains specific information regarding the objectives eligible for testing and the format in which these objectives will be tested. A second publication, TEAMS Instructional Strategies Guide, Written Composition, Grades 3, 5, 7, and 9 describes the TEAMS objectives as well as instructional considerations, activities, and strategies that can be used to promote mastery of these objectives in a written composition. The present manuscript builds upon and complements the two earlier publications. Its purpose is: 1) to assist teachers in constructing writing prompts which correspond to the TEAMS writing objectives and measurement specifications, 2) to provide sample writing prompts, and 3) to guide teachers in the evaluation of their students' written compositions.

BACKGROUND

Statewide basic skills assessment has been conducted in Texas since 1980. During the first year of testing, students' writing skills were measured on a written composition at Grades 5 and 9. The composition constituted one section of the writing test and objective items the remainder of the test. One year later, a written composition was added at Grade 3 with its incorporation into the program. As a result of a mandate from the Texas Legislature, testing was expanded beginning with the 1985-1986 school year to include Grades 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11 (exit level). At that time, a written composition was included as part of the writing test at Grades 3, 5, 7, and 9. Beginning with the 1990-1991 school year, the TEAMS exit level test will measure students' writing skills with a written composition test. Successful performance on this test will be required before receiving a high school diploma.

The TEAMS testing program is a criterion-referenced assessment based on specific objectives which focus on the essential elements of the curriculum. Texas public school administrators and teachers, as well as national consultants, have assisted in the identification of these objectives as minimum competencies to be mastered at or before the grade level tested. Students are tested in three major curriculum areas: mathematics, reading, and writing. The TEAMS test and the required Texas curriculum complement each other. Advisory committees consisting of public school curriculum specialists assist in ascertaining that the TEAMS test reflects the curriculum. TEAMS scores are publicized annually by the school district, and annual improvement is evidenced in these test scores.

Instructional implications of the TEAMS testing program are positive in many ways. Individual student reports sent to the schools indicate how many items the student answered correctly for each objective tested. As a diagnostic tool, TEAMS provides the information needed to determine each student's mastery level or his/her need for remediation. School districts must provide remediation for any student who fails one or more sections of TEAMS. In order to receive a Texas high school diploma, a student must pass the TEAMS

mathematics and the English language arts tests. Students who do not pass may retake the failed section(s) of TEAMS at any subsequent testing date until they pass. If all other graduation requirements are met, a diploma is issued upon successful completion of both sections.

THE WRITTEN COMPOSITION

As a process for communication, writing is categorized by its many forms. Each form is distinct from the others by its combination of purpose, mode, and audience. In A Theory of Discourse (Prentice Hall, 1971), James Kinneavy explains these models of communication and in the Texas Education Agency's TEAMS Instructional Strategies Guide for Written Composition, Grades 3, 5, 7, and 9 (pp. 2-12) a modified version focuses on the combinations of purpose and mode tested by TEAMS. Briefly, the following categories are viable TEAMS test options:

Grade 3:	Informative Descriptive
	Informative Narrative
	Expressive Narrative
Grade 5:	Informative Descriptive
	Informative Narrative
	Expressive Narrative
	Informative Classificatory
	Persuasive Descriptive
Grade 7:	Informative Descriptive
	Informative Narrative
	Informative Classificatory
	Persuasive Descriptive
Grade 9:	Informative Descriptive
	Informative Narrative
	Informative Classificatory
	Persuasive Descriptive
	Persuasive Classificatory

Regardless of the "type" of writing assessed, a successful composition will be well organized, will advance from simple to complex ideas, will demonstrate control of written language, and will respond appropriately to purpose, mode, and audience. (Appropriate response to audience is not a criterion for success on the Grade 3 composition.)

SCORING THE WRITTEN COMPOSITION

Focused holistic scoring is the process used to assess TEAMS written compositions. The process is called "focused holistic" because the criterion for assigning a score is the degree to which the paper organizes ideas for a specified purpose and audience/mode. It is based on the idea that a written passage is greater than the sum of its parts. The term "holistic" indicates that the total piece of writing is considered rather than individual

characteristics such as spelling, handwriting, or grammar. The process is "focused" because the written composition is evaluated in terms of specific objectives. These objectives require that the student respond with an appropriate purpose, mode, and audience (if applicable) to the topic specified in the stimulus. Consequently, content, organization, specificity, and elaboration are primary determinants of a student's score rather than language mechanics such as spelling or punctuation (unless the mechanical errors are so severe that they impair meaning).

TEAMS compositions are scored as first draft writing with priority given to the purpose of communication, the audience for whom it is intended, the method most appropriate for conveying the message, the clarity, organization, and delivery of the message.

Scores range from "0" to "4". Specific characteristics of papers at each scoring level are drawn up in detail so that there can be as little doubt as possible what score a given paper should receive. These characteristics are explained in greater detail within this publication.

PURPOSE-MODE-AUDIENCE

Communication is a continuous process that occurs at different levels. Its basic form is intracommunication which happens within oneself. Writing is one of the means by which this internal communication advances to the level of intercommunication or dialogue. Writing helps to organize one's thoughts, to select, combine, arrange, and develop ideas and to arrive at solutions, decisions, or conclusions.

As a process for communication, writing is categorized by its many forms. Each form becomes a model of communication by combining purpose, mode, and audience.

Purpose

According to Kinneavy, the purpose for communication may be persuasive, informative, literary, or expressive. The literary purpose, intended to provide aesthetic pleasure to both writer and reader, is not measured on the TEAMS test and will not be discussed in this publication. Considering the remaining three purposes, a writer may wish to convey information, convince someone of something, or clarify needs or wants. Generally, the purposes for writing do not occur in isolation. For example, a persuasive task may rely on expressive discourse in presenting information to influence an audience. However, one purpose is generally primary with the others subordinate to the main purpose. In the TEAMS test, written composition prompts are designed to focus as much as possible on a single purpose stated clearly or implied in the prompt.

If the main purpose of writing is to persuade, the writer must indeed attempt to convince someone that a particular point of view is desirable or make an effort to change the thinking of the reader by argument, entreaty, or reason. The writer should explain in detail why something should be done or give convincing reasons for a particular course of action. Persuasive writing needs the use of convincing language. Informative writing is often of a functional, practical nature. It requires a detailed explanation of facts or of how to do

something. Producing verifiable evidence, proposing a solution to a problem, diagnosing a situation, reporting, summarizing, or proving a point by generalizing from particulars are examples of informative writing. When a writer attempts to clarify what he or she thinks and feels, the purpose for writing is called expressive. Inner thoughts may be described, one's personal reactions to something may be related, why the writer believes in something may be explained, or an opinion about something may be expressed. Chart A indicates key words and phrases that identify a particular purpose; examples of writing tasks for each purpose are also given.

Mode

Every purpose for writing has a form of delivery. To facilitate the written message, communication must have an organizing principle called a mode. Modes of discourse, also called modes of organization, or forms of writing, serve as methods through which the purpose of writing is achieved. In other words, modes are ways of organizing to achieve a purpose. According to Kinneavy, modes of organization are narration, description, classification, and evaluation. Since evaluation, the form of writing that measures an object, process, or idea against a standard or norm in order to arrive at a judgment about it is not measured on the TEAMS test, it will not be discussed in this publication.

Narration is writing that tells or relates a story which focuses on the changing nature of its subject, and which contains a progression through time. Basic to narrative is a sustained sequencing of events in a particular order, such as relating events of a story or listing the steps that might be taken to complete a particular task. Narration generally employs the logic of chronology to relate activity or change in the subject. The writer creates episodes and motion. In descriptive writing, a verbal image or situation is REcreated as the writer perceives it. It is similar to a photograph or a still painting of a scene or event. There is no chronological progression through time. The writer produces a static verbal image of objects, people, places, scene. He/she uses location and detail to verbally paint the picture. Classification, like description, is static in nature. Classificatory writing gives order to images and situations through comparison and/or contrast of their characteristics. Classification calls for the writer to group elements on the basis of their characteristics; these groups or categories may be formed according to various attributes. Common examples of classification include defining by category or comparing and contrasting objects and events. Classification may require the writer to state two sides of an issue: the advantages AND the disadvantages, the likenesses AND the differences, or the good AND the bad qualities of an object or an event as perceived by the writer. While each of these three modes can be identified clearly, they do not generally occur in isolation. For example, a narrative may also include description or a description may also classify. For the purpose of TEAMS testing, the prompt attempts to cue students to the dominant mode so that they will use that particular method of organization in their written composition. Chart B contains key words and phrases used to identify mode. Examples of writing tasks for each mode are provided.

KEY WORDS/PHRASES WHICH IDENTIFY THE PURPOSE OF A COMPOSITION

PURPOSE	KEY WORDS/PHRASES				EXAMPLES OF WRITING TASKS
Persuasive	persuade	convince	tell reasons for doing something	explain why something should be done	advertisement petition letter to editor political speech letter to politician editorial movie review sales slogan
Informative	inform	explain facts	recall details about something	explain how to do something	directions human interest story report propose a solution business letter notice announcement biography news article textbook
Expressive	express opinion	describe inner thoughts	tell how one reacts to something	explain why writer believes in something	friendly letter autobiography journal conversation diary gripe session myth

CHART A

KEY WORDS/PHRASES WHICH IDENTIFY THE MODE OF A WRITTEN COMPOSITION

MODE	KEY WORDS/PHRASES	EXAMPLES OF WRITING TASKS
Narration	"...tell what happened next." "Tell a story about..."	short story history of an event news story
Description	"Describe what you see..."	description of objects, people, places
Classification	"Tell the advantages and disadvantages of..." "Tell what is good and what is bad about..." "Tell what is alike and what is different about..."	comparison contrast definition

CHART B

Audience

Depending upon the audience, the style of writing changes. If children perceive that they are always writing to or for the same person, the teacher, their writing will likely not grow. Varying the audiences the students write to can help to shape their choice of language and style of writing.

To a degree, the egocentricity of young writers contradicts this point. Most of their writing is simply expressive of their own thoughts, feelings, or experiences. Prior to third grade, children have little concept of audience and they write strictly to please themselves. Consequently, teachers need to introduce the concept of audience to children.

Possible audiences are categorized from the personal to the impersonal.* All writers address one of these categories of audience:

Internal Dialogue or Intracommunication (self) - writer acts as his/her own audience. Writer and audience, of course, know each other intimately.

Example: oneself

Conversation or Intercommunication (other individuals, small group audience) - dialogue with another or others: peer, friend, relative. Writer and audience know each other personally. Communication is informal.

Examples: classmates, teacher, friend, relative

Correspondence (groups of persons far away) - writer has limited knowledge of the audience. Correspondence is formal. Writer relates to the audience objectively.

Examples: political representative, school official, famous person

Publication (anonymous mass) - writer addresses an impersonal audience - an anonymous group over time and space. Communication is formal; writer relates to the audience impersonally.

Examples: readers of newspapers, local magazines, advertisements; special interest groups

*James Moffett, Teaching the Universe of Discourse. New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1968.

Purpose, Mode, Audience

At Grades 5, 7, and 9, each written composition prompt in the TEAMS test is designed to elicit a response which combines purpose, mode, and audience. Because very young writers tend to focus on personal thoughts, feelings, and experiences, prompts for Grade 3 do not address audience. Boundaries of purpose, mode, and audience relieve students of the time-consuming task of trying to determine what to write or how the teacher wants the task done. The guidelines of purpose, mode, and audience become the criteria for judging the degree to which the student has successfully completed the writing task.

To demonstrate how a prompt indicates purpose, mode, and audience, the following analyzed examples might be helpful.

> The principal of your school wants to require all sophomores to take a home economics course in which all students would learn to cook and sew. Think about whether you are for or against this idea. Write a letter to your principal in which you agree or disagree with this plan to require all sophomores to take this home economics course and present convincing reasons in support of your position. Be sure to explain your reasons. (Persuasive Descriptive prompt)

In this prompt, "present convincing reasons" indicates that the purpose is to convince or to persuade the reader of the writer's position. It is descriptive because it gives a visual image. It is static and does not require sequencing. Consequently, the writer will try to persuade by describing his/her position. The audience is clearly stated, the principal. The final sentence, "Be sure to explain your reasons," indicates that elaboration is required. Elaboration is explained in another section of this publication.

To analyze further, the writer could be asked to persuade by classification. In this case, the advantages and disadvantages of two options would be stated, the writer would take a position, and convincing reasons would be presented to a specified audience for choosing one of the courses of action.

> The principal of your school believes that each student should be required to learn some practical skills before leaving high school. Two courses have been proposed to the School Board for their approval, a Home Economics course (cooking and sewing) and an Auto Repair course. Discuss both courses, choose one of these two courses that you believe all students should be required to take, and convince the principal that your position is correct. (Persuasive Classificatory prompt)

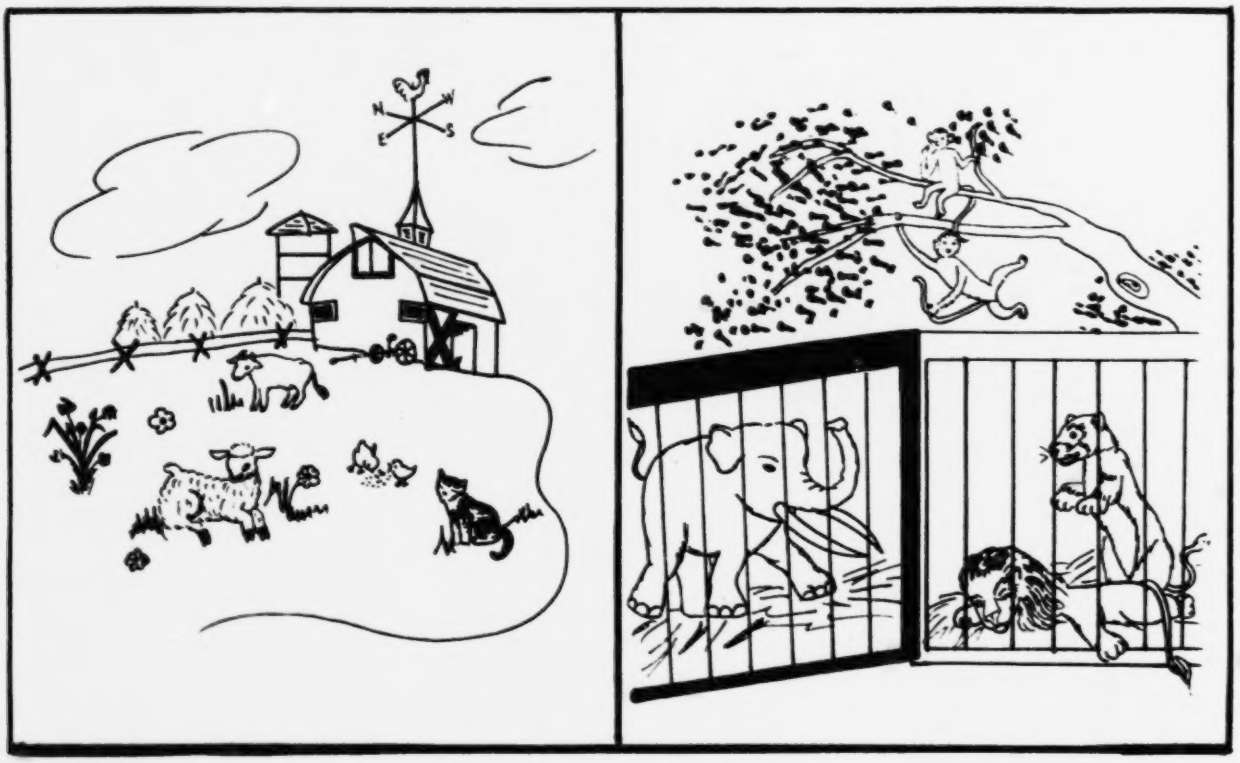
Once again, the persuasive purpose is evidenced. In this instance, however, the directions, "discuss both courses," is indicative of the classificatory mode, while the word "discuss" elicits elaboration. Students would be expected to detail their thoughts on each of the two possibilities. In classification, the writer may appeal to the intellect or to the emotions of the reader. Consequently, in persuasive classificatory writing, the writer needs to discuss

both options in a logical, organized manner, make his/her position definitely known, and then persuade the reader that this course of action is the one to follow. All three elements are essential.

The classificatory mode may be combined with the informative purpose. When a prompt elicits informative classificatory writing, it should require that <u>two</u> viewpoints be classified, that is the advantages <u>and</u> the disadvantages, the likenesses <u>and</u> the differences, the good <u>and</u> the bad qualities, or the comparison <u>and</u> the contrast of specific features. The prompt should also state whether the student is to explain, recall, or give information (purpose). Two kinds of prompts are possible for informative classificatory writing; a prompt may be a pictorial stimulus or it may simply state the ideas, objects, or places to be discussed. Sample prompts are:

Prompt for pictorial stimulus:

> Look at the two scenes shown below. Think about them. In what ways are they alike? In what ways are they different? (Informative Classificatory prompt)



Prompt for non-visual stimulus:

> Write a report for your class about how Thanksgiving and Christmas are alike and how they are different. (Informative Classificatory prompt)

Explaining <u>two</u> viewpoints in a logical, organized manner is essential. The information should be specific and elaboration must be present to successfully accomplish this task.

To distinguish further, a prompt may combine the informative purpose with the narrative mode.

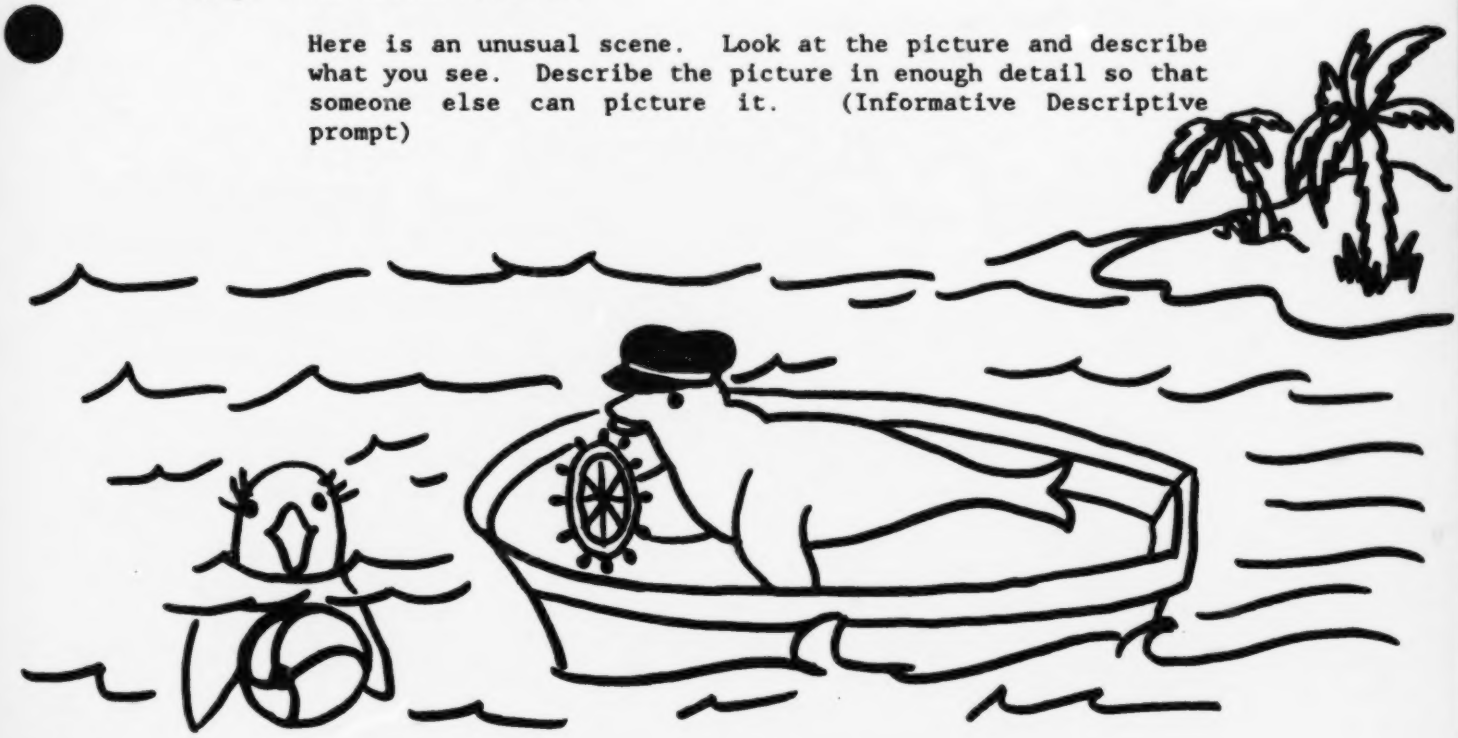
> You are completing a course in home economics. As a final project, you want to bake a birthday cake for a friend. Tell your teacher what you will do first, and then tell what other things you would do to complete the cake. (Informative Narrative prompt)

This prompt elicits information sequentially ordered. Each step must be logically, clearly, and fully explained before moving on to the next step. The audience is the teacher. An informative narrative prompt calls for the delineation of steps needed to complete a task. These steps need to be presented in a logical sequence. Elaboration should occur with the explanation of each step. A manual on how to do something, or directions for a traveler would require an informative narrative.

A prompt may require the combination of information with description. In this case, the writer MUST DESCRIBE BY RECALLING DETAILS for someone about something. The description elicited should be specific, elaborated, and rich in detail. The prompt may be a visual stimulus or an object that is very familiar to all students at the particular grade level tested. If a visual stimulus is given (a picture), the writer should organize in his/her mind the strategy that will be used to describe the picture. An example of an organizational strategy might be: focus first on the outstanding figure/object in the picture and describe it in rich detail, then locate other objects/figures in relation to their location to the outstanding figure/object describing each in full detail and with the use of vivid adjectives. Attention should also be given to background and foreground. If the writer chooses to imbed a story within a description, the description must be present and the writer must REcreate the scene or object in the mind of the reader. NO AMOUNT of narration no matter how eloquent may substitute for this requirement in informative descriptive writing. Narration may be present merely to enhance if the writer so chooses, but no sequence of events is required by an informative descriptive prompt. Examples of prompts for informative descriptive writing are as follows:

Prompt with visual stimulus:

> Here is an unusual scene. Look at the picture and describe what you see. Describe the picture in enough detail so that someone else can picture it. (Informative Descriptive prompt)



Prompt for a single object familiar to the students:

> Pick one of the following means of transportation and describe it to someone who has never seen this means of transportation. Choose from a car, a train, or an airplane. (Informative Descriptive prompt)

Unlike the informative descriptive prompt, the expressive narrative prompt REQUIRES a storyline or a sequencing of events. These events should be logically sequenced and clearly explained. The story should have a clear sense of beginning and ending. Tight control of the story is needed so that the reader knows how a story character gets from one episode to another. A "choppy" enumeration of events will not satisfactorily complete the task. Gaps in the storyline will lower a student's score. To elaborate on the characters, places, and events of the story leads to a higher score.

An expressive narrative prompt may be pictorial stimulus, or it may present a story scenario that is familiar to students at a particular grade. Below is an example of each type of expressive narrative prompt:

Prompt with visual stimulus:

> Here's a chance to have fun writing a story. Pretend that this fairy visited you one night and told you that she could make three of your wishes come true. Write a story about what happened the night this fairy gave you three wishes. (Expressive Narrative prompt)

Prompt with a story scenario requiring the writer to detail with embellishment the unfolding events of a story:

> Last night you dreamt that an elf appeared and said he could show you Elf Land. Write a letter to your pen pal in England to tell about your adventures in the land of elves. (Expressive Narrative prompt)

ELABORATION

In addition to the appropriate response to purpose, mode, and audience, and in conjunction with language control, organization, logic, specificity, and word choice, a successful response to every prompt must include elaboration. Words such as "discuss," "present reasons," "explain," "describe...in detail," are cues within a prompt that elicit the development of a writer's thoughts. The process by which a writer expands his/her composition is called "elaboration." Elaboration is characterized by complexity, embellishment, and fullness.

There are many forms of elaboration that a writer can incorporate into a composition. Some examples of elaboration in writing are given below.

ACTION WORDS (verbs) - a word that expresses an act, occurrence, or mode of being.

Example: He wiggled his way into the crowded elevator only to be devoured by its doors.

Alternative: He went into the elevator and the doors closed.

Although the alternative is a clear statement, the use of action words that give a vivaciousness to the activity is a means of elaboration.

ADJECTIVES - a modifier of a noun to denote a quality of the thing named.

Example: Her silky, long, jeweled gloves extended from the large puffed sleeve of her sleek, elegant gown.

Alternative 1: She wore a gown and long gloves.

Alternative 2: She wore a cool-looking gown.

Alternative 1 is bare and unelaborated. Alternative 2 uses the slang word "cool" which does not have any SPECIFIC definition. "Cool" may mean one thing to one reader and another thing to someone else.

COMPARISON - an examination of two or more items to establish similarities and differences.

Example: He had an enormous body and his nose seemed too small for his face.

Alternative: He had a large body and a small nose.

The alternative is bare and unelaborated.

DESCRIPTION - discourse intended to give a mental picture of something experienced.

Example: He wore perfect-fitting cowboy boots that had stitched designs on the sides and spurs on the elevated heels.

Alternative: He was wearing shoes.

Note the detail used in this description. A vivid picture of the cowboy boots appears in the mind of the reader while the alternative is bare and unelaborated. "Shoes" presents a vague image to the reader. The more specific the description is, the higher the score is likely to be. Vague descriptors such as "big," "great," "little" are better than no descriptors, but are only minimal.

Using traits that are characteristic of the nature of an object does not enhance a writer's score. For example, if the writer said, "The man had a head, two arms, and two legs," the composition would not be enhanced or elaborated because the writer merely stated what is characteristic of man in general. However, if something extraordinary about the man's arms, legs, and head appeared, then the description would merit consideration for a higher score.

DETAIL - to report minutely and distinctly.

Example: It had long eyelashes and rosy cheeks that made me think it was a girl dinosaur.

Alternative: It looked like a girl dinosaur.

The detail used gives substance to the writer's impression. The unelaborated statement is bare.

DIALOGUE - the exchange of sentiment, observations, opinions, facts.

Example: And then the little bird spoke, "Do not be afraid of this creature; he is a friend to everyone."

Alternative: The little bird said we should not be afraid.

The use of conversation embellishes the writer's thoughts.

EXAMPLES - a parallel or closely similar case.

Example: The same thing happened at my cousin's school, and it became an academic disaster.

The writer extends and clarifies his/her thoughts by an example.

LOCATION - an established or particular place.

Example: To his left side was a table covered with a striped tablecloth and a white, cheerful-looking rabbit was stretched out on top of the tablecloth.

The use of location is especially significant when writing in the descriptive mode. Location helps the reader visualize more accurately the scene being described.

METAPHOR - a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness.

Example: My cheeks were flaming with anger.

Metaphor adds vividness to the writing.

PERSONAL ANECDOTE - a short narrative of an interesting, amusing, or biographical incident.

Example: Some new friends are very trustworthy, like Tammy, who had just come to our school one month ago, and already we're just like inseparable sisters.

Note how this personal anecdote extends the writer's thought and adds meaning.

PERSONIFICATION - the attribution of personal qualities.

Example: The trees whispered among themselves as they surmised what would happen next.

Personification made this statement more interesting.

QUOTATION - a passage from another.

Example: If anyone thinks this scene is beautiful, then the saying "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder" is really true.

The quotation extended the writer's thought.

SIMILE - a figure of speech comparing two unlike things that is often introduced by "like" or "as."

Example: In some ways an old friend is like a comfortable old shoe.

This simile gives the reader a familiarity with the writer's thought.

SUPERLATIVES - of very high quality; surpassing all others.

Example: It was one of the most contemporary hairstyles I have ever seen.

The superlative makes this statement more meaningful and emphatic.

In responding to any combination of purpose, mode, and audience in a prompt, the writer must avoid merely listing or enumerating reasons, objects, and thoughts. Some elaboration is crucial to a minimally successful response. A variety of elaboration forms incorporated meaningfully in a composition raises the writer's score.

SCORING COMPOSITIONS

The scoring process for TEAMS is "focused holistic." The criterion for assigning a score is the degree to which the paper organizes ideas for a specified purpose, mode, and audience (if applicable). The underlying message of "focused holistic" scoring is the idea that the whole piece of writing encompasses more than any one single aspect of it. Consequently, focus on purpose, mode, and audience, as well as content, organization, specificity, and elaboration are primary determinants of a student's score rather than language mechanics such as spelling or punctuation.

Scores range from "0" to "4." Papers with "0" scores do not address the topic at all. Papers with scores of "1" attempt to address the task, but fail to do so acceptably. Papers receiving scores of "2" are minimally successful and are characterized by some elaboration and limited control of the written language. Papers with scores of "3" are well-written, have control of the written language, contain elaboration and demonstrate an organizational strategy. Papers receiving scores of "4" are highly successful. They are consistent, organized, and well-elaborated. They contain appropriate mechanics or conventions of language, rich details, and varied word choices.

Each composition is scored independently by two trained readers. If the scores do not agree, the composition is given to a third reader. The final score is determined by a two-out-of-three agreement on each paper. Should all three scores differ on a paper, it is read by the scoring director who determines the final score of that paper. A fourth scoring is an extremely rare occurrence.

For teachers to score students' papers by the same focused holistic strategy as TEAMS written compositions are scored, a guide containing important characteristics should be developed. Caution should be taken, however, so that any list or guide would not be used to attribute point values to these specific characteristics, but that it be used to suggest the presence of specific features in the piece of writing under consideration. Teachers may find it instructionally sound to involve students in the grading process. This involvement trains students to derive a "feel" for good writing. It gives them an understanding of what is expected of them, helps them to analyze their strengths and weaknesses, and demystifies the scoring process.

Although criteria for scoring papers are included in the TEAMS Instructional Strategies Guide for Written Composition, Grades 3, 5, 7, and 9, the following additional points are important.

First of all, consider: "Does the composition address the TOPIC stipulated in the prompt?" If it does not, that is, if the prompt required students to write a story about a hamster and the child wrote about his/her summer vacation at grandmother's house, the composition is "OFF TOPIC" and gets no further consideration. The paper is scored "0."

If the composition passes the first test, the reader then asks: "Is the composition written for the purpose/mode specified in the prompt?" The scorer must specifically identify a story with progression of events, action, and/or

characters if a narrative is required. No matter how eloquently the writer may have described the scene for a story, if the actual sequence of events is not present, the writer has failed to respond to proper purpose/mode. To decide whether the purpose/mode was addressed, some guidelines are helpful:

PURPOSE/MODE	WHAT TO LOOK FOR FIRST
Informative Narrative and Expressive Narrative	1. A progression through time. The use of time-clue words such as: in the meanwhile first soon later on afterwards 2. Is there a storyline? Does the writer actually relate what happened, or does the writer describe a scene or a person throughout the composition?
Informative Descriptive	1. Is there sufficient description for the reader to visualize the scene/person? 2. Based on the writer's composition, can the reader draw the picture accurately?
Informative Classificatory	1. Has the writer actually classified or given characteristics of BOTH sides of an issue? 2. Has the writer merely reversed his/her statements in discussing two sides of the issue?
Persuasive Descriptive and Persuasive Classificatory	1. Does the writer take a position on an issue? 2. Does the composition have the potential to CONVINCE the reader to change his/her thinking because of what is stated?

If the response to the above questioning is positive, the composition has met the criteria for "ON TASK." If these basic questions are negatively answered, then no further consideration is given. The composition receives a "1" because it does not address the task for which it was tested. Remember, in the holistic philosophy, the message supercedes the mechanics of language. No matter how well a student may write, if the message is not communicated, the composition score indicates just that: "1:USED WRONG PURPOSE/MODE."

If, however, a paper is poorly written, rambles without any apparent organization, leaves the reader confused, responds in a skeletal or list-like way, lacks control of the written language, or is inappropriate because of obscenities, lewdness, or unlawful acts, it receives a score of "1."

Assuming that a composition is ON TASK and does not manifest the above characteristics, the next step is to determine whether the message contains elements of good writing which will determine whether or not the writer is minimally successful in the task. This is where elaboration is crucial. To be minimally successful and earn a "2," the paper MUST have some ELABORATION. In every combination of purpose/mode, an extension of ideas is required, there must be some organization to the writing, the writer must not repeat or digress from the task by presenting extraneous material, and there must be some control of the written language.

Jumping over the PASS/FAIL hurdle meets the test of minimum competency in the particular writing task. To achieve a score higher than a "2," the reader considers the DEGREE to which the message:

- elaborates on ideas
- is rich in detail
- has clarity of thought
- clarifies ideas
- is logical
- has organization
- includes effective word choice
- varies sentence structure
- supports by examples
- uses topic and transition sentences
- keeps units of thought
- has language control
- has overall fluency of expression
- is thoroughly developed
- contains an unusual strategy that is carefully carried through
- has a clear sense of audience (if applicable)

Using these characteristics as guidelines and referring to the explanation of score points stated in the TEAMS Instructional Strategies Guide for Written Composition, Grades 3, 5, 7, and 9, the scorer can develop a "holistic" sensitivity for criteria required for a score of "3" or "4." A "4" is a paper that convinces the reader that there was nothing more the writer could have done to better address the purpose/mode of the task. It is a sense of completeness that characterizes a "4."

SAMPLE PROMPTS

Numerous school districts have developed materials for their own use. Occasionally, Student Assessment personnel from the Texas Education Agency hear of these materials. While the division of Student Assessment remains non-judgmental regarding all extra-agency materials referring to the TEAMS test, we have requested permission from the following persons to include some of the prompts which they developed that reflect the components of the TEAMS written composition specifications. Acknowledgment and appreciation are extended to the following specialist practitioners who have graciously shared their work with us for the purpose of this manuscript.

Alva Baptiste	Fort Bend ISD
Delores Block	Round Rock ISD
Sharon Borgh	Round Rock ISD
Pat Gerecci	Fort Bend ISD
Terry Hance	Round Rock ISD
Cherrie Porter	Pflugerville ISD
Sara Rueter	Fort Bend ISD
Terry Sansom	Round Rock ISD
Valerie Sheppard	Fort Bend ISD
Mary Spencer	Round Rock ISD
Roselind Weiland	Round Rock ISD
Chad Woolery	Dallas ISD

The following sample prompts clearly stipulate the audience. By their instructions they indicate the purpose/mode combinations.

Prompts Combining the Informative Narrative Purpose/Mode

Suggested Grade Level: 5

1. Pretend that you carved a Jack-O-Lantern for Halloween and placed it in your window. Your neighbors saw it and admired it. They want to carve one for their window and have asked you to explain how to do it. Tell them what must be done first. Then tell what other things they will need to do to make a Jack-O-Lantern.

Suggested Grade Level: 3

2. Pretend that it is a rainy day and your cousin who is your age is visiting you. You want your cousin to enjoy the day, so you decide to play your favorite game. Since your cousin does not know how to play the game, you must explain how it is played. Tell what game you will play, then tell exactly step by step how you would play it.

Suggested Grade Level: 9

3. Pollution is a serious concern in your city. The mayor of your city needs ideas on what can be done to eliminate pollution. He is conducting a contest for high school students to explain in detail a step-by-step process for eliminating pollution in your city. Enter the contest by writing a letter to your mayor which explains what needs to be done first and what other things can be done.

Suggested Grade Levels: 7, 9

4. You have been invited to a classmate's birthday party. You purchased a gift and wrapped it beautifully. Everyone at the party wants to know exactly how you wrapped it. Tell the group the step-by-step procedure of how you wrapped the birthday gift. Be sure to be specific.

Suggested Grade Levels: 7, 9

5. Pretend that you are a manager of a sandwich shop and write instructions to a new employee telling him how to make a submarine sandwich. Be sure to be specific.

Suggested Grade Levels: 7, 9

6. Pretend you took a trip back in time to a pre-historic scene. You meet some natives who do not know about electrical appliances. Select one electrical appliance that you think is most useful and tell the natives exactly how it operates.

<u>Sample Prompts for the Expressive Narrative Purpose/Mode</u>

Suggested Grade Levels: 3, 5

1. Pretend that a Tooth Fairy found your tooth and told you she will grant one big wish that you have. Write a story for your classmates about how that Tooth Fairy found your tooth and what happened after that.

Suggested Grade Levels: 3, 5

2. A friendly looking space creature stepped off a spacecraft right next to your home. He invited you and your parents to take a one-day trip with him to his homeland in space. You and your parents went with him and had a wonderful time. Write a story for your classmates about the day you and your parents spent with the friendly space creature.

Prompts combining the Persuasive Descriptive Purpose/Mode

Suggested Grade Level: 7, 9

1. A severe winter storm forced the principal to close your school for five days. Two of these days will have to be made up to meet state requirements. The principal can either require students to go to school on two Saturdays during the school year or require students to go to school two days longer in the summer. Write a letter to the principal telling him which plan you would prefer and give convincing reasons for your choice.

Suggested Grade Level: 7, 9

2. Benjamin Franklin wanted the national bird to be the turkey instead of the eagle. Which of these two birds would you choose as the national bird? Write a letter to the president in which you state your choice and give convincing reasons why your choice should be selected as the national bird.

Suggested Grade Level: 7, 9

3. Currently, students taking algebra in the eighth grade do not receive high school credit. Some students have petitioned your principal to give high school credit for this course while other students do not want this course to get high school credit. Choose a side on this issue and write an editorial for the school newspaper in which you state your position and convince your readers of your choice.

Suggested Grade Level: 7, 9

4. Your local school district has adopted a required attendance policy stating that students cannot miss more than ten days of class a semester without losing credit for the course. In a letter to your school board, present reasons why you agree or disagree with this policy.

Suggested Grade Level: 7, 9

5. Your local police department has decided to issue a curfew for all people under the age of eighteen. The curfew would mean anyone 18 and younger would have to be home by 10:00 P.M. All young men and women under the age of eighteen who break the curfew will be either escorted home or taken to jail, only to be released by a parent's signature. Write a letter to your chief of police advising him/her how to vote on this matter. Be sure to give convincing reasons to support your position.

Suggested Grade Level: 7, 9

6. Your local school board is considering eliminating all athletic programs at your school and replacing them with more basic subjects, like reading, writing and mathematics. Write a letter to your school board representative giving all your reasons why they should vote for or against this proposal. Be sure to convince the school board of your choice.

Suggested Grade Level: 7, 9

7. The city council wants to do away with the Fourth of July festivities for the city. How do you feel about this decision? Write a letter to your city councilman persuading him how you would like him to vote on this matter. Be sure to give convincing reasons for your choice.

<u>Prompts combining the Informative classificatory</u>

Suggested Grade Level: 7, 9

1. School work consists of many activities including homework and tests. Think about how homework and tests are alike and different. Write a composition for your teacher in which you explain both how homework and tests are alike and how they are different.

Suggested Grade Level: 5, 7, 9

2. Middle school students change classes and teachers for each subject each day rather than remaining with one teacher as many elementary students do. In a letter to your principal, explain both what is bad and what is good about changing classes and teachers.

Suggested Grade Level: 5, 7, 9

3. A group of students in your new school painted their names on the walls of the building. The principal can follow usual procedure and not allow the student to come to school for three days, or the principal can let them attend school but use their next three Saturdays to clean the walls on which they marked. You have been asked to help the principal make a decision. Write a letter to your principal in which you explain both the advantages and disadvantages of each type of punishment.

Suggested Grade Level: 5, 7, 9

4. Most people have received gifts on special occasions. Sometimes these presents are handmade. Write a letter to a friend in which you explain what you like and dislike about handmade gifts.

Suggested Grade Level: 7, 9

5. You have probably completed homework assignments at different rates of speed. Some assignments you finished quickly. Write a composition explaining the advantages and dis- advantages of completing homework quickly.

Suggested Grade Level: 7, 9

6. The United States has had many famous citizens in its history. Two well-known persons are Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King. Write a report for your social studies class in which you explain how these two Americans are alike and how they are different.

Suggested Grade Level: 7, 9

7. Competition is a fact of life, but the manner in which people respond to it differs. Some people avoid any situation where there is a chance to win or lose and some people will use any method for the chance to win. Write an article for your school newspaper in which you discuss the advantages and disadvantages of competition.

Suggested Grade Level: 7, 9

8. School will soon be out for the summer. You have been promised a job doing work you like and which pays well. However, you have also just been informed that you have won a trip to Washington, D.C., where you will be able to visit the President, Congress, Washington Monument, and other famous places and people for two weeks. If you take the trip, you will not be able to take the job. Write a composition for your teacher telling whether you will take the job or the trip, and give the reasons which convinced you to make this choice.

Prompts Combining the Persuasive Classificatory Purpose/Mode

Suggested Grade Level: 9

1. Your state is considering whether it should keep one of its beautiful national wildlife parks or replace it with a new super highway. In a letter to your State Representative, discuss both courses of action, choose a position, and convince the Representative that your position is correct.

Suggested Grade Level: 9

2. Your principal is considering whether your school should kept its cafeteria or replace it with food in vending machines. He has asked the students for their opinions. Write a letter to your principal in which you discuss both courses of action, choose a position and convince your principal that your position is correct.

Suggested Grade Level: 9

3. Your school district has an excellent science program. Ninth grade students are required to take one course in science. Students may choose either biology or chemistry. You and your friend are deciding which course to take. Write a letter to your friend in which you discuss both courses. Then choose one of the courses and convince your friend that he should take the course you selected.

Prompts Combining the Informative Descriptive Purpose/Mode

An informative descriptive prompt for Grades 3 and 5 would likely have a picture. Prompts can easily be made for pictures from readers, coloring books, and calendars. Select a picture, then write a prompt modeled after the following:

1. This is a picture of a _____. Look at this picture and describe what you see for someone to read.

2. This is a picture of a _____. Look at the picture and describe what you see. Describe the picture in enough detail so that someone else can picture this _____.

3. This is a picture of clowns. Look at this picture and describe what you see for someone to read.

COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

TITLE VI, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964; THE MODIFIED COURT ORDER, CIVIL ACTION 5281, FEDERAL DISTRICT COURT, EASTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, TYLER DIVISION

Reviews of local education agencies pertaining to compliance with Title VI Civil Rights Act of 1964 and with specific requirements of the Modified Court Order, Civil Action No. 5281, Federal District Court, Eastern District of Texas, Tyler Division are conducted periodically by staff representatives of the Texas Education Agency. These reviews cover at least the following policies and practices:

(1) acceptance policies on student transfers from other school districts;

(2) operation of school bus routes or runs on a non-segregated basis;

(3) nondiscrimination in extracurricular activities and the use of school facilities;

(4) nondiscriminatory practices in the hiring, assigning, promoting, paying, demoting, reassigning, or dismissing of faculty and staff members who work with children;

(5) enrollment and assignment of students without discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin;

(6) nondiscriminatory practices relating to the use of a student's first language; and

(7) evidence of published procedures for hearing complaints and grievances.

In addition to conducting reviews, the Texas Education Agency staff representatives check complaints of discrimination made by a citizen or citizens residing in a school district where it is alleged discriminatory practices have occurred or are occurring.

Where a violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act is found, the findings are reported to the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education.

If there is a direct violation of the Court Order in Civil Action No. 5281 that cannot be cleared through negotiation, the sanctions required by the Court Order are applied.

TITLE VII, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964; EXECUTIVE ORDERS 11246 AND 11375; TITLE IX, 1973 EDUCATION AMENDMENTS; REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 AS AMENDED; 1974 AMENDMENTS TO THE WAGE-HOUR LAW EXPANDING THE AGE DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT ACT OF 1967; AND VIETNAM ERA VETERANS READJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1972 AS AMENDED IN 1974.

It is the policy of the Texas Education Agency to comply fully with the nondiscrimination provisions of all federal and state laws and regulations by assuring that no person shall be excluded from consideration for recruitment, selection, appointment, training, promotion, retention, or any other personnel action, or be denied any benefits or participation in any programs or activities which it operates on the grounds of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, handicap, age, or veteran status (except where age, sex, or handicap constitute a bona fide occupational qualification necessary to proper and efficient administration). The Texas Education Agency makes positive efforts to employ and advance in employment all protected groups.

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